

## Facing Life's Challenges: Choices

While walking down the street one day a Corrupt Senator (that may be redundant) was tragically hit by a car and died.

His soul arrives in heaven and is met by St. Peter at the entrance.

... "Welcome to heaven," says St. Peter. "Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem. We seldom see a high official around these parts, you see, so we're not sure what to do with you."

"No problem, just let me in," says the Senator.

"Well, I'd like to, but I have orders from the higher ups. What we'll do is have you spend one day in hell and one in heaven. Then you can choose where to spend eternity."

"Really?, I've made up my mind. I want to be in heaven," says the Senator.

"I'm sorry, but we have our rules."

And with that, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell. The doors open and he finds himself in the middle of a green golf course.

In the distance is a clubhouse and standing in front of it are all his friends and other politicians who had worked with him.

Everyone is very happy and in evening dress. They run to greet him, shake his hand, and reminisce about the good times they had while getting rich at the expense of the people.

They played a friendly game of golf and then dine on lobster, caviar and the finest champagne. Also present is the devil, who really is a very friendly guy who is having a good time dancing and telling jokes. They are all having such a good time that before the Senator realizes it, it is time to go. Everyone gives him a hearty farewell and waves while the elevator rises.

The elevator goes up, up, up and the door reopens in heaven where St. Peter is waiting for him, "Now it's time to visit heaven..."

So, 24 hours passed with the Senator joining a group of contented souls moving from cloud to cloud, playing the harp and singing. They have a good time and, before he realizes it, the 24 hours have gone by and St. Peter returns.

"Well, then, you've spent a day in hell and another in heaven. Now choose your eternity."

The Senator reflects for a minute, then he answers: "Well, I would never have said it before, I mean heaven has been delightful, but I think I would be better off in hell."

So St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell...

Now the doors of the elevator open and he's in the middle of a barren land covered with waste and garbage.

He sees all his friends, dressed in rags, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags as more trash falls to the ground.

The devil comes over to him and puts his arm around his shoulders.

"I don't understand," stammers the Senator. "Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and clubhouse, and we ate lobster and caviar, drank champagne, and danced and had a great time. Now there's just a wasteland full of garbage and my friends look miserable. What happened?"

The devil smiles at him and says, "Yesterday we were campaigning. Today, you voted."

We live our lives making choices: some are bad; some are good and some could have been better or even the best choice on reflection.

My first choice was what to spend my shilling on a Friday night. Every Friday night we had a shilling to spend on sweets. I choose White Knight or Jersey Toffee because that would last the longest though it was not good for my teeth and later on for my braces on my teeth.

I had to make choices about subjects to study in year 11 and 12 and then at University. I had to make choices about dating girls and who I would take out. In my first year at Uni, I made the choice to go on a computer date. It was not a good choice. She was a Port Adelaide supporter and I was a Glenelg supporter (sworn enemies) and she dropped me about a half hour into the night.

I made other choices that were not great but did not land me in too much trouble. I made the best choice in marrying Liz and over the years we have made some great choices like having children and I have made some average choices as well though I thought at the time that they were good choices.

As we get older, there are still more choices to make about where we want to retire to; what big holiday to go on as we can only spend the money once and I am sure that there will be choices that we will need to make that we have not yet considered.

What choices are you making this week? What choices do you have to make? What choices are you putting off that you should make? What choices do you need to make that you don't want to make!

To help us make good choices, I want to turn to a young man called Joshua. His story of choices is mainly found in the book of Joshua but he also appears earlier on with Moses in the book of Numbers where he made some very good choices that led Him to be God's choice to be the leader of the Israelites into the Promised Land.

Joshua along with eleven others was sent to spy out the Promised Land. They saw a tall strong people residing in the land. They seemed like giants to the Israelites. Ten made their choice about going in and conquering the land. Their choice was no!

Only Joshua and Caleb choose otherwise. They said to the people that if the Lord is with us, we will be able to go in and conquer the land and its inhabitants. The people listened to the ten and made a bad choice. The whole people wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb.

Their choice not to go into the land ended up with all except Joshua and Caleb dying in the wilderness.

Joshua and Caleb's choice enables them to become God's choice to lead the people into the Promised Land.

We are confronted with choices that are not easy. From a human perspective, the right choice may seem to be the impossible choice to take.

During World War II, Winston Churchill was forced to make a painful choice. The British secret service had broken the Nazi code and informed Churchill that the Germans were going to bomb Coventry. He had two alternatives: (1) evacuate the citizens and save hundreds of lives at the expense of indicating to the Germans that the code was broken; or (2) take no action, which would kill hundreds but keep the information flowing and possibly save many more lives. Churchill had to choose and followed the second course.

The best choice is not necessarily the easiest choice. For Joshua and Caleb, the difficult choice was made easy when they considered who was on their side and what he had promised viz God. The good choice became the God choice!

For them and for us, the good choice decision is not the What but the Whose! Whose choice will you make?

Your choice? The majority's choice? The easy choice? The God choice!

What prevents us from making the God choice is fear! It was the fear of the Nephilim, the giants that resided in the Promised Land, that prevented the people from making the God choice.

It is fear that rises up within us and robs us of making good God choices. It is the fear of the unknown; the fear of what others may think; it is the fear of what you see ahead, the mountain that needs to be climbed, and the fear of inadequacy that can prevent us from making good choices that are God choices.

Joshua becomes the God choice to lead the people into the Promised land. He is the God choice because he demonstrated His reliance and belief upon God and His power. He saw the giants of the Promised Land as grasshoppers where the rest saw themselves as grasshoppers!

It still was not an easy job and there would be many challenges. But the Lord spoke to him at the beginning of his leadership after Moses died.

*After the death of the LORD's servant Moses, the LORD spoke to Moses' helper, Joshua son of Nun. He said, "My servant Moses*

*is dead. Get ready now, you and all the people of Israel, and cross the Jordan River into the land that I am giving them. As I told*

*Moses, I have given you and all my people the entire land that you will be marching over. Joshua, no one will be able to defeat you*

*as long as you live. I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will always be with you; I will never abandon you. Be determined and*

*confident, for you will be the leader of these people as they occupy this land which I promised their ancestors. Just be*

*determined, be confident; and make sure that you obey the whole Law that my servant Moses gave you. Do not neglect any part*

*of it and you will succeed wherever you go. Be sure that the book of the Law is always read in your worship. Study it day and*

*night, and make sure that you obey everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Remember that I have*

*commanded you to be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the LORD your God, am with you*

*wherever you go."*

Choices become easier when we hear the choice of God clearly. Joshua heard that he was God's choice for the task. He was told

that the Lord will be with him and give him the land that his foot stepped upon. He heard the word of encouragement: Be strong

and Courageous. Do not be terrified or discouraged. He was told to study the Law and keep it.

Our choices become easier when we ask God about His choice and be obedient to it even though the choice seemed too difficult or too strange at the time.

God's choice to conquer Jericho, the great walled city, was to march around the walls seven times with the music band and singers leading the way then give a shout. I am sure it was a little out there for Joshua and his army. Not normal war practice for an army.

Yet the walls came down and the city was conquered. A close look at the war strategy of Joshua reveals that no attack plan was repeated. Each victory was won by a different God given method. He waited upon God and God gave him the war strategy that would bring victory.

But in the midst of the God choices came a bad choice. The Gibeonites had heard about what happened to Jericho and Ai and so they set up a ruse to protect their cities. They came to Joshua with donkeys loaded with worn out sacks and cracked wine skins. Their supply of bread was dry and mouldy. They pretended to come from a far distant land and sought a treaty.

Joshua examined their donkeys and tried their bread. It looked legitimate and seemed so. But the scripture records : ***The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord.***

Joshua makes a treat ratified by an oath. Three days later they found out the truth but they could do nothing because of the oath. They could not kill them and so they made them wood cutters and water carriers for the community and the altar of the Lord.

Bad choices are made when we do not inquire of the Lord. Even when it seems an obvious choice to make and all the evidence points in a certain way, it is still important to ask the Lord about whether this is a God choice.

What bad choices have you made? Has it been because you have not sought advice, prayed about it and asked God for the right choice to make.

Be careful. You can pray about a choice but you need the Lord's direction in some way. Too often we pray but do not wait for the answer to direct us.

The land is divided up amongst the twelve tribes. Cities of refuge are appointed so that anyone who has accidentally or unintentionally killed a person, can seek refuge from the one who wishes to avenge the death.

Finally it was time for Joshua to die and he assembles all the people to renew the covenant at Shechem. He restates their history story with God starting with Abraham and reiterates what God did. He talks about the time with Moses and God's rescue from Pharaoh through the Red Sea. He reminded them about what God has done through the wilderness and rescued them from their inhabitants. He reminds them of what God did when they entered the Promised Land from the parting of the Jordan River to the victories over Jericho and the other people groups. He reminded them of the plunder that God gave them: cities that they did not build; vineyards that they did not plant; food that they did not toil and produce.

So he challenged them with the final choice that they had to make. Will they choose to follow the gods of Egypt and of Canaan or will they follow the Lord God who led them and gave them victory.

It's a no brainer they replied. But Joshua reminded them that the Lord God is a holy and jealous God. Since he has done so much for you, He will be reluctant to forgive your rebellion and sin. In fact if you forsake Him for the local gods, he will bring disaster upon you and make an end of you.

*"Now then," Joshua continued, "honor the LORD and serve him sincerely and faithfully. Get rid of the gods which your ancestors*

*used to worship in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, and serve only the LORD. If you are not willing to*

*serve him, choose today whom*

*you will serve, the gods your ancestors worshiped in Mesopotamia or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are now living.*

*As for my family and me, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:14,15)*

But the people replied that they wanted to choose the Lord God. The covenant was made, recorded in the Book of the Law of God and Joshua set up a large stone as a witness to the choice that they have made. History records that the next generations did not read the Book or remember the stories of God's victories for them. They made bad choices and followed the other gods.

It is the same choice for us to do. Whom do we choose to serve? The gods of our world: riches; success; focus groups; facebook; twitter. There are many gods in our world that we listen to and are influenced by and lead us up the wrong path. Or do we choose to follow Jesus!

A woman was driving home one night. The weather was really nasty. Rain was coming down in buckets and visibility was very poor. Seeing taillights ahead of her, she followed the car in front. Not being able to see, the car in front seemed to be going in the right direction. So she stuck with it. All of a sudden the car in front of her came to a stop. She began to wonder what had happened; perhaps the car in front had hit a deer or some thing like that.

She began to feel uncomfortable; thinking being stopped in the middle of the road can often lead to accidents. Much to her alarm the car in front of her turned off their lights. Her concern was now growing as well as her anger, and she was then startled by a knocking on her window. She looked up and there was a man standing in the pouring rain wanting to speak to her.



She cracked the window open and asked the man what the problem was. The man replied by stating that that was the question he was going to ask her. She retorted that she wasn't the one who had stopped in the middle of the road and then turned off the car lights. The man's reply was that they were not in the middle of the road, but in his driveway.

Obviously, this woman had chosen the wrong leader to follow. She had chosen a leader who would not take her to where she wanted and needed to go. She had chosen the wrong leader and the wrong road.

Brothers and sisters, be careful of the choices that you make, especially when the road to life is not clear and there are many signs telling you to go this way or that. Be careful when you follow your intuition and become dogmatic about the direction you are going.

Like the lady driving in the rain, you could end up following the wrong leader and end up on the wrong road. The choice is always ours. But it is best making the right choice by asking the right god for direction.

It has been 6 weeks since I wrote to you. In that time we have continued to pray for people, attended two conferences, have our eldest daughter get married and organise a trip to the Holy Land which is coming together.

**Walking Free Centres:** The Coolangatta Healing Centre has a great team but no clients that come. We are seeking God about this and need some wisdom. The location for us is great but people either do not know about us or can't find us. We have enough money to pay for the rent but not much loose change to pay for advertising etc. We are also teaching a small team in Adelaide with the hope that this will be established in 2013.

**Walking Free:** God is still providing clients and the resources to continue. We have some complex issues to address but God is good and gives us insight to help the client. We find again and again the hurt and lies of the past holding people back from their destiny. We see the freedom that God gives to people and the restoration that he provides.

**Twin Towns Uniting Church:** The people continue to provide a friendly pace for people to come and worship. We have people coming and going but again we are blessed to have a couple of young families. Some of our older members are struggling with their health issues.

**Family:** David and Maddy are back in Adelaide renting Naomi's flat. Naomi is married to Jon and will live in his flat. Jess has her own one bedroom flat. Liz spent 10 days helping them all to clean house and move just before the wedding. The wedding went very well.

**Conferences:** We attended the Burning Ones conference where James Goll was the speaker. It had a strong prophetic edge where his sessions were more than just teaching but a prophetic worship experience. I had not experienced this for a very long time. The conference was not as profound as last year when we heard Lance Wallnau. We also attended the Global Leadership Conference for two days, hearing people's stories and input about leading churches and organizations. This has a strong teaching component. It was interesting and challenging to hear Condelezza Rice, John Ortberg, Craig Groetchell and Jim Collins.

**India:** I still keep in contact with Rev Sambabu and Pastor Devadas. Their work continues and we continue to support them in pray and donations.

**Finances:** We are blessed by God and the generosity of many people. Some have increased their support and others have had to pull out for personal reasons. Our costs have increased as we have paid Liz for some of the amount of work and prayer that she does for the ministry. If we go ahead with praying at Coolangatta, there will be rent to pay.

Yet we have paid all our bills and there is a still a small amount of money in the account ready for next month's commitments.

We are most thankful to God for what He has done and is doing with Walking Free. We thank you, sincerely, for your financial support and your prayer support however small or large it may be. Without you, this ministry would not be able to help and heal people through the power of God.